

*“An Approach to Perform César Franck's Sonata for Piano and Violin in A Major for Collaborative Pianists”*



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### Abstract

Sasipa Rasmidatta: An Approach to Perform César Franck's Sonata for Piano and Violin in A Major for Collaborative Pianists

This research aimed at studying collaborative piano techniques and interpreting collaborative piano repertoire using César Franck's Sonata for Piano and Violin in A major as a case study. Hence, researcher has evaluated techniques from textbooks, personal experience, and teachings by internationally renowned musicians.

The research found that to become a great collaborative pianist, one requires not only an advance piano technique but also an omnidirectional musicianship. Therefore, the pianist should consider roles of both performers, rhythmic accuracy, sound balance, articulations, dynamics, listening skill, cues, fingering and pedaling together with studying the score of the instrumentalists to create good ensemble.

Although, many pianists often perform in chamber music setting, the art of collaborative piano is considered a new musical discipline that has still not widely written about. The researcher hopes that this research will be beneficial to those who are interested, especially who wish to study in the field of collaborative piano, and become an inspiration for more collaborative piano researches in Thailand.

**Keywords:** Piano / Music Education / Piano Accompaniment / Collaborative Piano / Collaborative Pianist / César Franck / Violin Sonata

### Problem Statement / Statement Significance

When talking about piano performance, general audience may see that the piano solo is not difficult to understand. On the other hand, when mention about collaborative pianist or piano accompanist, there are only professional and advance training musician who understand the exact role of this kind of pianist. Even then, the art of collaborative piano is considered as less known art in the world. It is an aspect of music that ordinary people do not understand in its importance and role except only collaborative pianist and the solo performer playing with a pianist only.

Collaborative piano is one discipline of piano performance which plays a very important role in classical music. Even the art of collaborative piano has its root from playing collaboratively with other ancient musical instrument since the early B.C. However, its role is usually forgotten or not much in consideration which maybe because in solo performance of musician such as violin recital, cello recital, flute recital and etc. the audience's main purpose is to listen to the soloist only. Thus, the way that the collaborative pianist can play well supported and blended with the soloist is often said that the success of the performance is because the solo performer who can perform well and impressive which in fact, to perform a perfect piece, the collaborative work of the pianist is really important. The collaborative pianist should have advanced skills in piano playing together with knowledge and understanding in music interpretation and technique of each musical instrument that they have to work with. Moreover, they should be able to control technique using and create precise color for each piece. Besides, the pianist should be witty, smart, and good musicianship in conjunction with excellent sight reading skill and be able to solve problems immediately that may occur during the performance.

Therefore, researcher, who has special interest in collaborative piano with solo instrument, appreciates the importance and usefulness of disseminating accurate knowledge in the art of collaborative piano to be known for those who are interested, musicians, and especially pianists who wish to continue further study in depth in collaborative piano. So that researcher aims at studying on collaborative piano for Sonata for Piano and Violin in A major, composed by César Franck, the famous French composer. This piece of work is a standard repertoire for collaborative pianist that needs advanced skills and it is the piece that collaborative pianists for western string instruments have to study.

### Objective / Aim

1. To study and explain the technique of collaborative piano.
2. To demonstrate how to interpret the piece from the collaborative pianist aspect by using Sonata for Piano and Violin in A Major of César Franck as the case study.

### Methodology

1. Study relevant information

This research studies on interpretation and technique of collaborative piano with music instruments especially western string instrument along with the related information of the case study repertoire and related information such as theory of collaborative piano, composer's biography, composition structure, and etc. from scores, Thai and international textbooks, thesis, articles, and related research by searching from the following sources.

- 1.1 Silpakorn University Music Library
- 1.2 Chulalongkorn University Libraries
- 1.3 Music Library, College of Music, Mahidol University
- 1.4 Online database information resources
- 1.5 Thai and international textbook of researcher

2. Information screening

When collecting the useful information, researcher screens the essential data to set the guideline for data research writing.

3. Data Analysis

Derive the screened data to analyze technique used to perform and interpret the piece. And arranging practice sessions with the soloist to evaluate the analyzed techniques before record the result.

4. Record result

Record the selected techniques and information to interpret the piece, which results from related practice session with the soloist.

5. Verify data and summarize the results

Verify the accuracy of the written analysis to summarize the findings.

6. Research presentation

After summarizing the results and examining by advisee, research is approved to be presented in the form of complete research.

The period working on this research about An Approach to Perform César Franck's Sonata for Piano and Violin in A Major for Collaborative Pianists is from August 2015 to May 2017.

## Conclusion and Significance

Even if the Sonata for Piano and Violin in A Major by César Franck has 4 movements but with cyclic form technique which is the signature of Franck, it makes audience feel in with the piece as if it is one large coherent composition that has alternative texture, speed, and color within each movement without giving the feeling of separated to 4 movements as in others' sonata.

Researcher has concluded techniques and significant collaborative piano methods in this piece as follows

### 1. Interchanging Roles

It can be said that collaborative piano in the sonata of music instrument does not play the role just as the background of the soloist but it has equal role as the soloist. Hence, when analyzing this piece, it is found that the main theme appears in both violin and piano part, furthermore, it also has the countermelody that alternatively play or match the main melody that appears throughout the piece. Therefore, pianist should firstly understand that this piece is the interchanging roles of both performers.

Interchanging roles found in this song is as follows

- 1.1 The response of main melody with countermelody
- 1.2 The short melody fills in between the main melody
- 1.3 Imitation
- 1.4 Question-Answer passage between violin and piano part
- 1.5 Canon

### 2. Balance

Balance in this place consists of voicing, register, and dynamics.

#### 2.1 Voicing

Apart from knowing their own role will make pianists be able to play responsively and supportively to the violin, voicing is another thing that similar to interchanging roles but they are different in voicing that is to play the important melody which is hidden in various line clearly.

There are various voicing styles in this song as follows

2.1.1 Voicing of countermelody that is hidden within the chord of collaborative piano part

2.1.2 Voicing of bass and chord in collaborative piano part

2.1.3 Voicing in piano solo part

2.1.4 Voicing of main melody hidden within chord

2.1.5 Voicing of countermelody which is similar to the main melody but different in rhythms

2.1.6 Voicing of other melody along with the main melody

2.1.7 Voicing of short fill in melody

2.1.8 Voicing of the same melody between violin and piano part

2.1.9 Voicing between right and left hand of piano part

2.1.10 Voicing of main melody that fill in in short period

## 2.2 Register

In this sonata, there is the melody between violin and collaborative piano part features throughout the piece which is the same and another melody plays alternately and at the same time there is the same melody performs together in many passages. To study in depth of the register of both lines thoroughly and accurately will help pianists to be able to manage the balance in collaborative piano better. Moreover, register relates inescapably to dynamics. For example, when violin has lower register than piano part, the pianist should play a little softer than usual in order not to drown the sound of violin.

## 2.3 Dynamics

In addition to the relationship of dynamics and register, dynamics is also another significant element to manage the balance of the piece. It is said that in some passages of the piece, the composer has assigned the long crescendo and decrescendo so the pianist should be careful not to start off too loud or softer the sound too fast in order to keep the balance between two lines not to interfering each other.

Besides from what is mentioned above, there are other elements that should be considered such as articulations, fingering, pedaling, cue, and careful listening. Other foundation is also important such as rhythmic accuracy that affect the most to define mood of the piece. From technique and method of collaborative piano that researcher has analyzed, collaborative pianist can adopt and adapt to use in other collaborative repertoire and if the

collaborative pianist has deeply understanding in these details, they will be able to perform effectively and can become a great collaborative pianist.

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## Program Note

### *Sonata for Piano and Violin in A major : César Franck*

Sonata for Piano and Violin in A major of César Franck is the piece of work that blends the various feelings together whether it is beauty, excitement, imagination, and emotional. This sonata is such a popular show case which is different from other works of Franck that is only occasional exhibited. This song was composed in 1886 to be the marriage present for Eugène Ysaÿe, the violinist who performed the premiere performance for this song. This piece of work is also arranged for cello and flute.

This sonata consists of 4 movements which are Allegretto moderato, Allegro, Recitativo - Fantasia (Moderato), and Allegretto poco mosso. Franck uses the cyclic form technique as his signature which means that it has unified melody by reusing original tune in

more than 2 movements. This makes the audiences feel that they are listening to the one vast whole song that has continuous involvement not the separated 4 movements.

In the first movement, Franck's Generating Melody Cell is the first 3 notes of the main theme to expand as the other melodies throughout the piece. This main melody is moved in different key in favor of Franck. It is seen from his composition class at the moment that he usually put this idea on his students' composition. Originally, Franck intended to make this movement go slow but when he heard what Eugène played, he decided to change it faster to be *Allegretto moderato*.

The second movement is in active and dynamic style. It starts off with piano solo to present the main theme before violin. This piano solo part is considered as one of the hardest and most challenging solo piano part compared to other collaborative piano literature. Thereby, the pianist should have advanced piano skills to be able to present the continuity of melodies that hidden in between running passages. Moreover, the pianist has to control these notes to be in perfect perpetual motion.

The third movement, even its speed is *Moderato* but Franck defined it, *Recitativo – Fantasia*, which means songs that resemble to the recitativo of opera. This movement takes turn to question and answer between violin and piano part throughout the movement similar to Recitative in opera and full of artistic imaginary of *Fantasia*. Although, the melody of this movement gives a dark feeling, but it is full of joy.

The fourth movement starts from playing the main theme in piano part along with quarter note in 2/2 following by canon in violin part. Main theme in this canon style appears again many times in between other melodies which are the melody from the early movements in cyclic form technique that is best noticeable in this movement. The piece continues fluently towards canon melody between 2 lines at the same time and also increases intensity to make the ending of the song be powerful and elegance.



**Presenter's : Sasipa Rasmidatta**

Sasipa Rasmidatta is an alumni of Wattana Wittaya Academy. She started piano accompanying at the age of thirteen as a school and church choral pianist. Sasipa received full scholarship for high school and undergraduate to study piano performance from Wattana Wittaya Academy and partial scholarship from Kasetsart

University, where she has declared the 1<sup>st</sup> highest rank highest admission score and graduated with the first class honour in 2006. She was also awarded additional tuition scholarship from Yamaha Foundation Thailand.

Sasipa became an Orchestral Pianist of The Royal Bangkok Symphony Orchestra, one of the leading orchestra in the nation since 2006. She had opportunities to work with world-renown artists such as José Carreras, Andrea Bocelli, David Foster, Mikhail Pletnev, Lea Salonga, Steve Sidwell, John Owen-Jones, Charice Pempengco, Jackie Evancho and also National Artists of Thailand; Charin Nantanakorn and Rear Admiral Veerapan Wor-klang.

Besides being a pianist, Sasipa is a Chamber and Piano instructor at the Silpakorn University Music Honor Program associated with Mater Dei Institute and a piano instructor at the Bangkok Symphony Music School. She is also studying Master of Music in Collaborative Piano at the Faculty of Music, Silpakorn University, under the guidance of Dr. Pornphan Banternghansa. She recently attended the Exchange Program at the Conservatorium Maastricht, Netherlands to study Collaborative Piano and Piano Ensemble with Jeroen Riemsdijk and Anastasia Safonava. With excellence in both music and academic reputation, she received partial scholarship from the Faculty and the Fund for Classical Music Promotion under the Patronage of HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana.

**Youtube link (song to perform 4 minutes):** <https://youtu.be/7MTUEHEP5wA>